

MEMORANDUM FOR: Paul

Per your request, Harry has sent us  
comments on the IC paper on COINS.

would like your (Harry's) views.

Note especially Harry's recommendation  
at paper clip.

Attached for your info is Steininger's  
response to  (I have sent a copy to

)

Attachment

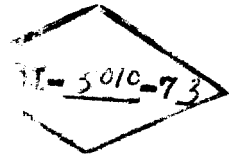
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(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 101-101  
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

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11 December 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director for  
Intelligence

SUBJECT : CIA COINS Assessment Group

REFERENCE : PD/DCI/IC Memo to DDI dtd 30 Nov 73,  
same subject

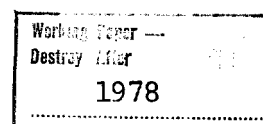
1. This memorandum comments on the two IC papers on COINS files and paragraph 5 contains a recommendation on the IC suggestion for creating a CIA COINS Assessment Group. The attachment is a detailed analysis of the IC/PRG memo evaluating representative COINS files.

2. COINS surfaces as a periodic problem requiring high-level attention because it is viewed differently by various participants and bystanders; COINS does not have a well-defined mission. Various agencies views on COINS are as follows:

a. CIA--CIA (or at least CRS) views COINS as a mechanism for sharing existing files. If another agency can use our files in their current form, we will make them available if feasible ("if feasible" hangs on dissemination restrictions in many cases). CIA will modify a file for another agency only if that agency will provide the necessary resources or if the modification is useful to CIA and we have the resources. CIA would build a file for the Community only under the same conditions. CRS feels that COINS has primary utility within the DoD Community.

b. DIA/State--The CIA view of COINS files appears to be shared by DIA and State. DIA feels that its primary responsibility is first for building and

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SUBJECT: CIA COINS Assessment Group

maintaining files for itself and the DoD commands; COINS comes second. DIA appears to be more willing that CIA to improve or modify its COINS files as a result of external pressure.



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d. ASDI/IC Staff--The NSA view is shared by the COINS Executive Agent, ASDI and by the IC Staff in its recent substantive view. I would estimate that PFIAB shares the NSA view also.

3. These differing philosophical views of COINS files (and COINS files are the essential element in COINS) occur because the COINS mission has not been carefully defined. These different views and positions carry over into other COINS issues; e.g., how much should an agency obligate to upgrading COINS and should an aggressive effort be made to obtain COINS usage? Is COINS a mechanism for sharing existing files with their known shortcomings or is it to become a Community data base with responsibilities assigned to participants to meet specified quantitative and qualitative standards? Must an agency build a COINS file because another agency wants it? If so, who pays? Is a COINS file another source that should be checked or is it the final Community authority replacing other manual and machine files? The IC paper implies the latter role.

4. Original COINS planning called for a well controlled six-month to one year experiment followed by an evaluation and a recommendation. The evaluation

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SUBJECT: CIA COINS Assessment Group

was long delayed. COINS was evaluated early in 1973 at DCI's direction by a high level COINS Review Group under the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Intelligence (ASDI). The Group's evaluation was relatively superficial. The Chairman issued his own report; it was never officially coordinated and CIA [redacted] (CIA member) and DIA do not wholly concur in its findings or recommendations. In summary, the Chairman recommended that COINS continue and that it be upgraded and made more useful. The Review Group's report was approved by the D/DCI/IC on behalf of the DCI. COINS has become a de facto developmental operational system.

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5. I agree with the IC Staff that the COINS role and participant responsibilities to COINS need defining. After that is accomplished, planning where to go from here and who has responsibility for what should be relatively simple. The task of defining COINS responsibilities should not be given to a group or committee as suggested by [redacted]. I recommend that the DDI respond to the [redacted] proposal by recommending that the DCI task a fairly senior CIA individual with a strong substantive background and no previous COINS bias to prepare a paper defining the COINS role. This assignment should be on a full time basis and the individual should be given a minimum of three months to complete it. If the DCI concurs in the findings and recommendations of this senior CIA manager, the paper should then be circulated for Community reaction and coordination. Until this definition task is completed, COINS will continue as a problem in the Intelligence Community.

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[redacted]  
H. C. EISENBEISS

Director, Central Reference Service

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Attachment: A/S

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COMMENTS ON THE [REDACTED] MEMO ON  
SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW OF SOME COINS FILES

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1. Background

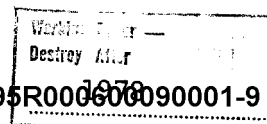
a. The following brief background is repetitious of previous support for you on COINS; I believe it is worth repeating before critiquing the IC/PRG paper evaluating current COINS files.

b. COINS originated in a PFIAB-recommended experiment with an intent to share existing files among members of the Intelligence Community. The PFIAB envisioned COINS as a first step toward developing an automated interagency information handling system. In PFIAB's view the Community was not adequately sharing its computerized data bases and PFIAB assumed the existence of a lot of duplicative files that could be cut if file sharing was increased through a COINS-like system. There are no implications in the PFIAB recommendation that agencies should build files for COINS or improve or modify files made available to COINS.

c. No files have been built for COINS. Within COINS channels, requests have been made that one or two agencies build new files. These requests have been denied on the grounds that the requested agency had no need for the file, had insufficient manpower resources to build the file, or could see no reason (especially cost benefit) in producing an on-line computer file.

d. There have also been requests through COINS channels that agencies improve the maintenance and currency of various files. Reasonable attempts have been made to honor these requests; e.g., CIA presently updates its files with greater frequency; NSA has initiated efforts to standardize its files and to improve currency (see attached NSA memo). No agency, however, has made major changes in file content or organization to satisfy a COINS requirement per se; there have been some changes in NSA files to satisfy IGCP requirements

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and in one case, DIA modified an airfield file to accommodate NSA requirements because NSA was thus able to terminate building its own file. Other minor requested file changes have been made.

2. Comments and Observations on the IC Paper

a. Following are comments on IC criticisms/observations relating to the role of COINS and CIA files. In some cases, I have summarized or paraphrased IC remarks.

(1) IC Critique--*The COINS files examined are not substantively adequate to meet most analyst requirements. The analyst still has valid reasons to maintain readily available manual files. Unless there are major improvements, there appears to be little reason to continue the COINS effort.*

Comment--These remarks highlight the differing philosophical views of COINS discussed elsewhere. The view taken above assumes that the purpose of COINS is to establish mechanized files as services of common concern that Community analysts can depend on as a final authority. CIA has traditionally taken the view that COINS is another way of exchanging files--it is another appropriate source.

(2) IC Critique--*The IC Staff made several queries comparing AEGIS with FINTL, a small subset of AEGIS provided to COINS. The results from AEGIS were superior and the IC Staff concluded that information is withheld from FINTL for security reasons. They also noted that (substantive?) material is left out of FINTL because FINTL has a lesser character capacity than AEGIS.*

Comment--(a) I am uncertain whether the IC Staff understands the content of FINTL. AEGIS, as you know, is a very large bibliographic index of a high proportion of the Community's raw and finished product. The   COINS system, on which CIA COINS files reside, cannot accommodate a system as large as AEGIS, so a two year subset of finished intelligence index records was made available. FINTL, therefore, will always provide less output than AEGIS.

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(3) IC Critique--There is a real human problem in interface between the analyst user and the files. The analyst is dependent on an intermediary (CRS) to interrogate the files. Several CRS analysts on whom PRG was dependent were busy on other projects. On 2 November 1973 the COINS computer was down, and an analyst could not have gotten to the files regardless of his priority.

Comment--(a) CRS agreed to act as an intermediary with COINS in order to facilitate usage. There are only two COINS terminals in Headquarters but these are more than sufficient to carry current work loads. We thought CRS assistance was appropriate to test whether the system had any utility. If anyone has an inclination to use a terminal, we would be most happy to show them how.

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(b) The IC paper implies that, on occasion, CRS was hesitant about providing assistance because of the pressure of other projects. This is not so. Delay in providing COINS service is caused by COINS system malfunctions and slow turn around time.

(4) IC Critique--*The COINS APEAR file does not list the positions of individuals.*

Comment--The Chinese portion of the Leader Appearances file contains the positional data used by the Chinese when they announce an appearance. It is included for nuance purposes; i.e., to aid researchers who are trying to detect underlying meanings. The Soviet machine file does not contain positional data; the semiannual and annual hard copy Soviet reference aid publications do contain a positional listing. Leader appearance data are a political research tool prepared for Soviet and Chinese specialists who do not require positional data assistance. The APEAR file was provided to COINS from the onset to meet PFIAB and Community requests for biographic related files. Because of its limited interest and the fact that the same data are available in published form, I do not consider it of high utility to COINS.

(5) IC Critique--*CIA's Chief of State file, which supports a hard copy monthly publication, is inconsistent in its coverage. As a glaring example, the Communist Party leader of the People's Republic of China (Mao) was listed but his Soviet counterpart (Brezhnev) was not.*

Comment--*Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments* is not a machine file (though the printing process is automated by PSD), it is not a COINS file and it has never been considered for COINS. There is no point in putting this file on a computer, it is reprinted monthly and many of the customers will never have access to a computer. Mao is not a government official (though he runs China) and technically should not appear in this publication but we thought it ridiculous to leave him out. Perhaps

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for consistency Brezhnev should be included for the same reason Mao is in, but technically it is correct to leave him out. In other words, the IC paper is correct that there is an error in consistency, but for the wrong reason.

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(7) IC Critique--The inventory of Community Information Handling Systems indicated that CIA's Strategic Cost Analysis Model (SCAM) file is used by the following elements: CIA (ONE, OSR); DoD (OSD, DIA); ACDA; and the NSC Staff. OSR claims, however, that this file is available to OSR analysts only.

Comment--Again, this is a file unrelated to COINS. In fact, it is more a computer based accounting system to obtain cost estimates than a file. Its outputs are inputs to NIEs. A CIA/DIA panel was recently established to oversee utilization of this file. Outputs from this file are made available to DIA. NSA, ACDA and others are welcome to come to OSR to examine outputs and to discuss the estimates with OSR. There has been no attempt to restrict SCAM data; but it is not data that should be made available to anyone without some interpretation.

(8) IC Critique--In a comparison between an NSA COINS file MOSES and a CRS manual biographic file concerning travel of Hafez Ismael, the IC paper concluded that neither file was conclusive. Both files contained information on USSR and Romanian trips. Only the manual file had reference to the Yugoslav trip. Only MOSES referred to a possible trip to Switzerland. The material from the manual file on an Algerian trip is misleading because the trip could not be confirmed.

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25X1      Comment--This IC critique is misleading. Our manual files contain data on all of the trips except for the Swiss trip. There is reference to a Swiss trip [ ] that for some reason was not processed into our files. The trip has never been confirmed and neither has the Algerian trip--not an unusual occurrence considering that both trips were projected as future travel that probably did not take place and hence there is no follow-up confirmation. In sum, CRS identified four trips of which three were confirmed and MOSES identified three trips of which two were confirmed.

(9) IC Critique--The kinds of problems the PRG encountered in its attempt to evaluate COINS files indicate that in order to make COINS substantively useful some basic management decisions have to be made. The attitude is still too prevalent that files exist for their own sake. Some people associated with COINS tend to hide behind semantic barriers to avoid facing the issues involved in substantive evaluation of the files. For example, one official questioned the propriety of considering automated files as intelligence products. The obvious answer is that when an automated file substitutes for a hard copy document or substantially augments hard copy production, it is in fact a product and should be so treated. Another official when confronted with the fact that the CIA AEGIS system produced 66 records on a given question and the COINS FINTL file only produced 6 records on the same question, claimed that the number of hits was only a "quantitative" problem, not "qualitative." And surely in this case, the great discrepancy in the number of records says something about the quality of the systems.

Comment--Further evidence of the basic problem with COINS alluded to elsewhere; i.e., what role does it have?

### 3. Evaluation of IC Findings

I do not find the IC paper a very thorough or thoughtful piece of work. I am inclined to believe that it was undertaken with bias aforethought. In my view, it does

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accomplish two things. Namely, 1) it again surfaces the COINS role/mission problem and 2) it unearths probable deficiencies in the FINTL file that no one else has brought to our attention and that should be corrected. Otherwise, it contains a fair amount of inaccurate and non-COINS related data. The inaccuracies could have been eliminated if the IC staffers had researched the facts and had been a little more forthcoming in seeking data. I see no reason for the non-COINS related comments other than to reinforce a bias.

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